

surface of the container 14. An opening is formed in the container 14 by pulling on the portion 16. The container 14 is severed in the region of the scores 18. If the pull tab 26 is attached to the first end 22, pulling the tab 26 toward the floor will pull the sheet 12 along with it. Alternatively, if the pull tab 26 has not been used, the first end 22 is grasped and pulled, whereupon the sheet 12 can be withdrawn from the container 14 and positioned appropriately to cover the end and sides of the table 28. If adhesive portions have been included as part of the edges of the sheet 12 and/or the tab 26, the sheet 12 can be attached to the table 28 in order to prevent undesired movement of the sheet 12 during the surgical procedure. After the surgical procedure has been completed, the sheet 12 can be severed along the perforations 25 and discarded. The remainder of the drape 10 can be removed and discarded after the patient has been removed from the table 28.

A Second Embodiment

[0033] Referring generally to FIGS. 4-6 and 10-11, a surgical drape according to a second embodiment of the invention is indicated by the reference numeral 30. The drape 30 is substantially identical to the drape 10, with the following exceptions. The drape 30 includes a second sheet 32 that has first and second opposed ends 34, 36. The second end 36 is connected to the second end 24 of the sheet 12 disposed within the container 14, preferably by adhesive or heat-sealing. The remainder of the sheet 32 remains outside the container 14. In a manner similar to the first sheet 12, the second sheet 32 is folded to form pleats 38. The first end 34 is movable relative to the second end 36 so as to expose a desired number of pleats 38. The second sheet 32 preferably has one or more adhesive surfaces 40 that are protected by removable layers 42 on that side that faces the upper surface of the operating table 28.

[0034] A second, closed container 44 is provided. The first sheet 12, the first container 14, and the second sheet 32 are disposed within the container 44. The container 44 has a sealed closure 46 that can be selectively opened to permit the contents thereof to be removed from the container 44. It is expected that the contents of the container 44 will be sterilized and will remain in that condition until the closure 46 is opened.

[0035] The second sheet 32 preferably is made of a sterilizable, relatively soft material. It is possible to make the second sheet 32 from a first ply of netting material, a second ply made of an absorbent pulp material, and a third ply of a fluid-impervious material such as polyethylene or vinyl. If sterilization is not critical, the container 44 can be made of the same material as that from which the container 14 is made. Preferably, however, the container 44 is made of two materials—a backing sheet that is porous to a sterilizing gas such as ethylene oxide and a facing sheet of a transparent, non-porous material such as mylar or clear polyethylene. The container 44 is commercially available and is referred to as a “sterilization pouch.”

[0036] In use, the sheet 32 is moved to that position shown in FIG. 5 and is secured in place on the upper surface of the operating table 28 by the exposed adhesive surfaces 40. Thereafter, the sheet 12 and the container 14 are positioned as described previously and as shown in FIG. 6. After the surgical procedure has been completed, the sheet 12 can be

removed from the remainder of the drape 30 and discarded. Then, after the patient has been removed from the table 28, the container 14 and the second sheet 32 can be removed and discarded.

A Third Embodiment

[0037] Referring to FIGS. 7-9, a surgical drape according to a third embodiment of the invention is indicated by the reference numeral 50. The drape 50 is substantially identical to the drapes 10, 30, with the following exceptions. The drape 50 includes a third sheet 52 that preferably is made of a fluid-impervious material such as polyethylene or vinyl. The sheet 52 has first and second opposed ends 54, 56. The second end 56 is connected to a selected one of the first container 14, the second end 24 of the first sheet 12, or the second end 36 of the second sheet 32 in the region of the connection between the first container 14 and the second sheet 32. The first end 54 is movable relative to the second end 56 so as to cover a desired portion of the patient. Such covering is facilitated by a cut-out portion 58. The third sheet 52 preferably has adhesive surfaces 60 on its periphery that are protected by removable layers (not shown) on that side that faces the patient. The adhesive surfaces 60 that are expected to contact the patient are made of double-sided tape that employ patient contact grade adhesive.

[0038] It is expected that the sheet 52 will be attached directly to the patient during pre-operation preparations by means of the adhesive surfaces 60. After such preparations have been completed, the sheet 52 can be removed from the patient. Then, the second end 56 can be severed from the remainder of the drape 50 (see FIG. 8) and discarded. The remaining portions of the drape 50 will remain in place while the surgical procedure is performed. After the surgical procedure has been completed, the drape 50 can be removed and discarded as described previously for the drapes 10, 30.

[0039] With continued reference to FIG. 7, a pouch-like container 70 can be used with any of the drapes 10, 30, 50. The container 70 has a large opening 72 at a first end 74 and a small, selectively openable valve 76 at a second end 78. The container 70 includes a layer of adhesive adjacent the first end 74 that permits the container 70 to be attached to, and removed from, a selected portion of the first sheet 12 or the first container 14. The container 70 can be used to collect tissue, fluids and other waste materials discarded during the surgical procedure. Fluids can be withdrawn from the container 70 through a hose (not shown) connected to the valve 76. Solid materials will be retained within the container 70 for disposition after the surgical procedure has been completed. The container 70 is commercially available from Mitrotek Medical, Inc., Columbus, Miss. 39701.

[0040] As will be apparent from the foregoing description, a surgical drape according to one of the embodiments of the invention can be positioned in any desired place on the upper surface of the operating table 28 in order to perform any desired type of surgical procedure. It is possible that two or more drapes 10 can be used at the same time to protect different portions of the operating table 28. Merely by opening the first container 14, the first sheet 12 can be withdrawn from the container 14 and extended as necessary to protect the table 28. The second sheet 32 similarly can be extended over the operating table 28. Because the drape 10 is pre-positioned on the table 28, there no longer is a need to lift the patient once the patient has been placed on the table 28.